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I Joined the Navy for Adventure – I got all that and more

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My current job is director of the Intrepid Spirit Brain Recovery Center, Camp Lejeune. We deliver holistic, integrated, interdisciplinary patient and family focused care to

return individuals who have sustained a traumatic brain injury to the highest level of function possible after their injury.

By Capt. Tom Johnson, director, Intrepid Spirit Brain Recovery Center, Camp Lejeune

Editor's Note: We wrap up Brain Injury Awareness Month with a note from the director of the Marine and Sailor Concussion Recovery Center. A board certified neurologist, Capt. Johnson has deployed to Iraq with the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned to evaluate the care provided to service members with possible traumatic brain injury. He has published a number of papers on traumatic brain injury, as well as a book on the psychological and social aspects of military conflict.

As a boy growing up in a Scandinavian household in Winona, Minnesota I was raised on sea stories. They ranged from Viking age sagas, to stories about my great grandfather's life as a sailor before he came to America, tales of my great uncle's service in the Navy as an able bodied seaman during World War One, and my uncle's adventures as a Naval intelligence officer working as a code breaker in the Pacific during the second world war. The times and locations where the stories took place changed, but there was always a common theme of adventure and travel that ran through each of them.

When I graduated from college I knew I wanted to go to medical school, but I also wanted to get out and see the world. The [Navy Health Professions Scholarship Program](#) payed for medical school and gave me an opportunity to travel as an undersea medical officer.

After completing my training I served as an undersea medical officer in Holy Loch, Scotland. It was a maturing experience and as a result, my understanding of the Navy changed. I realized that the Navy offered not just the chance for adventure, but also the opportunity to serve my country by providing care for service members and their families. It was at that time I decided to make a career of the Navy— I was hooked!

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Most of the service members that we see do so well that at the end of treatment they return to full duty and get back in the fight. We use a team approach of doctors, nurses, therapists and others, combined with state of the art diagnostic techniques, like powerful 3 Tesla Magnetic Resonance Imaging machines with special diffusion tensor imaging computer software, to help us get the most amount of clinical information possible about our patients. We then work with them and their families to develop an individualized treatment plan to help them on their road to recovery.

It's not an easy job, but it is very gratifying. I am grateful that the Navy has given me an opportunity to work hard at something that is so important.

I'm Capt. Tom Johnson. I am Navy Medicine

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